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“All Spectators Are Cowards Or Traitors”: Reflections On The University Of Arizona Gaza Solidarity Encampments

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Report and analysis from *Living and Fighting* about protests and encampments at the University of Arizona.

On Tuesday, April 30 and into the early morning of May 1, 2024, hundreds of people, fulfilling different roles and moving fluidly between them, collectively constructed an encampment at the University of Arizona, raised a perimeter around it, barricaded that perimeter, held off a police advance, launched a supportive rally of several hundred people on the public avenue west of the encampment, and then formed a defensive line in the street to protect the encampment from a second police advance. Throughout the night, engagement with the police escalated from encampment participants’ willingness to negotiate, to a rejection of all attempts to quell the occupation through soft power tactics. This included rebuffing all bids for conversation from the police and administrators: all of their endeavors to negotiate or communicate were responded to with chants of, “Fuck you pig!” When sheriff’s deputies with helmets and shields approached the camp, and when they later attempted to expand their lines to surround it, camp occupiers pelted them with water bottles and other projectiles, in some cases causing the police to fall back in response.

How was all this possible? Just twenty-four hours prior, an encampment on the University of Arizona Mall was abandoned an hour before the administration-mandated “curfew” by self-appointed leaders within the encampment who announced that they’d come to a “democratic decision” to leave. Camp was packed up and dozens of people who